1:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938) 1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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spear, and magic horn. In this way the new chiefs are shown to their people.

Chiefs who are to be independent now separate, each moving off with his men to the place where the senior age-village of that chiefdom will eventually be built. All fire in the country is extinguished, even the fires in the homesteads of the old men, and in each of the new independent chiefdoms new fire is made, ceremonially, by the senior headman of the chiefdom and his fellow next in rank. One holds a lion-bone while the other twirls a medicated stick in a groove in the bone. The senior headman and his second each gives fire to the village headman immediately junior to him, and then the latter in turn to his immediate junior, until each of the headmen has fire. At this point the future division of each new chiefdom is foreshadowed, for the second senior headman in each new chiefdom is recognized as the leader of one side of the country. As each village headman lights his fire he calls: 'Come men of such and such a village to me!' and they take fire from him.

Since we are not primarily concerned with symbolism in this book we shall not enter at length into the interpretation of these events.[1] It must suffice to remind our readers of the Nyakyusa myth that their chiefs came down from the Livingstone mountains ten generations ago bringing fire with them, and that they found the previous inhabitants of the valley, who became their subjects, without fire, and eating their food raw. The extinguishing of the old fires and lighting of new is interpreted by the Nyakyusa as a symbol of the new chieftainship. A chief with whom we were well acquainted explained it thus: 'The fire is the fire of lordship (*umoto botwa*). The old chieftainship is coming to an end, the new has come. They extinguish the fires in all the homes, those of the young men and those of the old men, then they make new fire which is taken to every home. For formerly Mwangamilo [the old chief] would have had little power [after the 'coming out'], Mwakyusa and Reubeni [his sons] would have ruled.' But why fire? we asked. 'Because of old,' they relate, we chiefs came with fire, the commoners had not yet got it, they ate raw food only. When we came we slept in men's houses and we made fire and cooked food. Men were astonished, and said:

[1] A full analysis of the symbolism of one ritual necessitates a comparison of all the rituals of the society, which will be made in another book.

1:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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"Ha! what's this?" They were burned; so they said: "These are chiefs because they brought this fire." It is this they remember, even to-day. . . .' And another informant explained: 'The fire means (*kukuti*) that a new chief has come, he brings fire, we throw away the old fire in the house.'

Having lighted their fires the young men cut bamboos and build temporary shelters for themselves, making one or more huts according to their numbers. It is forbidden for them to sleep in old huts, nor may they build on the site on which they lived as boys. Usually their first huts are on what was formerly pasture land, and later their fathers move aside to make room for the new generation. On the new site the two senior headmen of the new chief, together with a doctor, plant with magical ritual two branches of a *ficus* (known in Nyakyusa as *iliyabe*)—a species which is important economically since the bark of saplings provides the traditional dress of Nyakyusa women. These trees, known as *ulupando* and *umpandapanda*, are planted where the future boundary will run between the two halves of the young chief's country, and the senior headman (who is leader of the senior half of the country) builds his house near where the *ulupando* has been planted. He and his colleague, together with the doctor, proceed, after planting the trees, to set up the hearth-stones of his hut. Again magic is performed. Nyakyusa informants were not agreed as to the symbolism of these trees, as they were about the symbolism of the new fire. The root *ukupanda* means to plant a crop, or to set up, or establish the hearth-stones of a house; it is used also for establishing, or treating, with medicines. Some informants interpreted the *ulupando* as the chief and *umpandapanda* as his wife, saying:'We are planting the chief and his wife.' Others said that the two trees represented the two senior headmen of the country, another that they represented the chief's two senior wives. What is certain is that *ulupando* is regarded as more important than *umpandapanda* and that both are taboo. No one may cut the trees. If anyone breaks the taboo it is believed that lions and leopards (closely associated with chiefs) will roar at night, and treatment by a doctor will be necessary to still them. It is also widely believed that the strength of the chief is associated with the growth of the trees. 'If these trees go dry the reign will not be successful, the chief will be defeated in war. If they flourish and grow the reign will be successful, the chief is

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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764 QUESTION: What are the stones in the clefts of hands and toes?
● 773 MWASALEMBA: Kyala when he created men said: 'At the death ritual do this, it is the shade, it is the body.'

775 Mwasalemba went on to discuss the puberty ritual and attributed sexual desire and diarrhœa to the shades. He explained that faeces (which are buried) 'go below to the land of the shades' (*vide* p. 127; 210 ff.).

764 SYUNGU: If we leave out something a child runs off to Mwibonde
[158] [wild pasture-land] and catches hold of that which is bad and pants with madness (*ikigili*). Some go to Mwibonde and gather faggots and put them on their heads then throw them away again.

QUESTION: How is it that people ever omit a ritual?

SYUNGU: Some omit some of it. They make mistakes out of ignorance.

QUESTION: But do any omit it altogether?

[184] SYUNGU: No, only the Christians. No pagan neglects it altogether.

QUESTION: But those who have run away and are not there (e.g. women who have eloped with lovers)?

SYUNGU: Yes, indeed, it is they who neglect it, but those who are at home perform the ritual.

QUESTION: How about stealing the banana bunch?

SYUNGU: Yes, we steal it, but we tell the owner beforehand, and when we eat the mash we mix the stolen with the home-grown, that which is stolen is always a plantain and that from home is a sweet banana. The plantain is the man's and the sweet banana the woman's. And when we bathe we wear a plantain leaf, which has been stolen, in front, and a sweet banana leaf, which comes from home, behind.

MWASALEMBA:[1] The girl brought the spear of her husband and stuck it in the ground. At the end Losi (my eldest son and her full brother) pulled it up and it will always be on my wall. The spear is an essential part of the ritual; without it the ritual would go wrong. If she came with no spear we should send her back again to fetch one.

764 We drink the medicine because, when our son-in-law has died and
587 our daughter lies with another who has not been our son-in-law before, if she comes and gives us food with the filth (*indafu*) on her then we gasp and cough with *ingotolo*. It is quite different if she runs away from her husband when he is alive. Then we drink no medicine. Yes, then she comes, with *indafu* on her, and gives us food and nothing happens.
[828] I don't know why. Kyala made us black people like this. It is when her husband dies that we drink. We drink as soon as she lies with her new husband, not after she becomes pregnant. If we see that she is pregnant before she comes we are angry. She should come first to the ritual and then conceive. She does not wait until her periods stop before coming

[1] Referring to the *ingotolo* ritual for his daughter described on p. 66.

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa
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585
354 new home, and her mother-in-law provides her with fire and a pot.

783 After the bride has had full intercourse with her husband she cannot return home, or see her own parents, until she has taken them the ritual *ilibalaga*. After sexual intercourse she wipes her husband's genitals with her hands, then wipes them on a fowl and some millet: these together form the *ilibalaga*. In the morning she goes off without washing—'with the filth of intercourse on her'—to her parents' house, taking the fowl and millet with her. The fowl is killed on a path and cooked with *ikipiki* medicine and, if the bride is the eldest daughter of one of the father's first two wives, her father and mother eat it together. Her mother eats alone if she is a younger daughter, or the mother is a junior wife. If the father is a chief the husband may kill a young bull and beef is sent in place of the hen.

834 After eating the *ilibalaga* her parents resume intercourse[1] which has been taboo from the time the girl first menstruated. If no hen is brought because the husband is poor, the parents still resume sexual intercourse, but the bride, when she visits her home, must not take water from her mother's pot. Someone else draws for her and she drinks it outside from a separate calabash. If she drinks
[753] inside, or if her mother uses the calabash she has used, it is believed that her mother will get diarrhœa. She also avoids her father's bed and stool.

606 With the ritual of marriage must be included the negative ritual of avoidance between a woman and her husband's father and between those identified with him or her. The taboo applies from the time of betrothal or, if the girl has been betrothed as an infant, from well before she reaches puberty, and forbids father-in-law and daughter-in-law ever to look at one another or meet face to face on the pathway, or enter the same house, much less speak together. As we have seen, a similar taboo applies between the bride and her own father during her seclusion, but is relaxed when he
[184] has given her a gift. Between a woman and her father-in-law, however, it is never relaxed, except among the more sophisticated
● 773 Christians. A myth of origin tells of a case of incest between father-
606 in-law and daughter-in-law which led to the establishment of the
811

[1] Kasitile maintained that if the mother has not reached the menopause the parents do not lie together until the daughter's pregnancy is apparent. 'For the mother to conceive before the daughter is forbidden, but old women are fruits sucked dry.' Mwakionde denied any danger in mother conceiving before daughter.

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938) 1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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taboo, and the practical difficulties of observing the taboo if fathers and sons live in the same village is cited as a reason for the age-village organization.[1]

The marriage ritual may be said to finish with the eating of the *ilibalaga*, but avoidance of father-in-law and daughter-in-law continues until death and no clear line can be drawn between the marriage ritual proper and the rituals of pregnancy and birth which follow.

It is plain from the events described that the *ubunyago bwa-busungu* is a marriage as well as a puberty ritual and that the husband and his family play an essential part in it, but if a girl is not betrothed before puberty a curtailed ritual is still performed for her when she grows up. She drinks the *undumila* medicine, she washes with a brother, and her mothers put her formally into the hut of seclusion. They cook for the various feasts, and they tell her brothers to call their friends to help dance the stamping dance. The litter is cleared by her mothers in due course, and she is shaved and instructed. When she is eventually married, only the rites of slaughtering the bull of virginity, taking her to her husband, and returning with the *ilibalaga* are performed. She does not wash with him ritually.

(*b*) *The overt purpose and symbolism*

The avowed purpose of the *ubusungu* ritual is to protect the physical and mental health of the girl and to ensure her fertility. 'If the ritual is not performed the girl will fall ill, go mad, or not bear children.' Numerous informants were agreed on this point. Angombwike expanded it, saying: 'It is said that if they do not perform the ritual of *ubusungu* the bride will go mad. When she is sick of the madness they perform the ritual. If the doctor says: "Those below are angry," then the father of the girl takes water and prays in the banana grove saying: "My father and my grandfather, let the child recover from her sickness." Sometimes the doctor says: "The so-and-so's (naming a village) have cursed her"; then the father seeks a bull and they eat it. It is the curse which comes from the mouths of people when many whisper saying: "Why have they not performed the ritual? Why have they not performed it?" It comes from their evil breath.' Neglect of the puberty ritual is therefore thought both to anger the shades and to shock the neighbours, who expect to feast on this occasion.

[1] cf. Monica Wilson, *Good Company*, pp. 82–6.

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
FN17 Ngonde FN17

133 and warlike tribe, the latter until recently their
101 oppressed subjects and slaves.

173 The earliest traditions go back to a time when the Konde dwelt in Malongo, in the area now known as
● [173] Mahenge. There their god Ngeketo, roused to wrath by three attempts to destroy him, abandoned them, and is now the God of the white men. Whether on this account, or for some other reason, a great migration brought them to the country north of the Songwe River, where they settled down, no doubt conquering older inhabitants. At some unknown time, but before the Angoni reached so far north in their great march from Zululand, the Sango, neighbours of the Konde northwards, were driven out of their homes by intertribal warfare. They broke down over the intervening mountains, and overcame the unwarlike Konde, among whom they settled down as chiefs, retaining until now the tradition of their Sango ancestry. Whether at the same or another time, the Kinga, probably for the same reason—pressure from behind—swarmed down the steep mountain passes, and established themselves in the Nserya region.

One of the leading Kinga chiefs was Mwangonde, who, under the name of Chungu, occupied land at Kabari, near the Mwakeleli Mission Station. His son, Kyabara Chungu, setting out with an armed force in search of more fertile garden land, met with varying fortunes, until he was finally obliged to cross the Songwe into what later became Nyasaland. In this region Chungu seems to have made easy con-

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
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men admit that their fathers ever acknowledged more than one God. And yet, as I have already indicated, the name *Kyala* is by no means restricted to the Supreme Being; and there are legends of human gods which go far back into the past. The Henga, a neighbouring tribe, freely acknowledge the worship, in the past, of a number of minor deities, and belief in them is common among the Bantu peoples generally. This is, perhaps, the point at which the confusion in the Konde mind reveals itself most decidedly, for it is the border line between the spirits of great chiefs still active in the underworld, minor deities, and the Supreme Being Himself.

In the land of Marongo, from which the Konde originally came, so say the fathers (who in the same breath will deny the existence of more than one God), there were three gods, *Lyambilo*, *Mbasi*, and *Ngeketo*. Of *Lyambilo* all that need be said is that he is still the god of the Kinga. *Ngeketo* was the youngest of the three, and one day he went with his boy friends to herd the cattle on the plain. While they were there *Ngeketo* took maize and planted it, and lo! it grew, and the same day they ate it roasted in the fire. When the elders of the people and the other two gods heard of it, they were jealous and slew *Ngeketo*. He lay dead for three days, and on the third day he arose, but was killed again in exceeding great anger. Again he arose, and was seen by some, but disappeared, and it was said that he went to the coast, where he became the God of the white man. The older men say that this story has not been modified by Christian influence

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
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and it may be so, but there is a variant, which is free from suspicion, in which the God came back to life in the form of a serpent, was cut to pieces by his fellow-gods and the elders, who, when he again came back, served him as before, upon which he went to the white man, who to this day prays to him. At Karonga the old people used to say, " We have smitten the Son of God in the neck," but I have not been able to trace the origin or connection of the saying, except that it is not Christian, and may be connected with traditions of *Ngeketo*. 773

The story of *Mbasi* is very different. He is the evil one, to whom deceit and wickedness are a pleasure. Europeans are still living who have seen the great stores of ivory and cloth which were offered to him by terror-inspired people, and laid up in a cave at Matema on the lake shore. The cave has now been robbed of its contents, as *Mbasi* himself has been of whatever of dread his name inspired in the past. It is not very long ago that the last prophet of *Mbasi* died. He lived near Masoko, and within living memory he climbed a small eminence there, and proclaimed that *Mbasi* demanded cattle to be sent to him without delay, the prophet himself being the guardian appointed by the God. And the cattle were sent in goodly numbers! 776 792

Long ago, says a legend, when *Mbasi* walked the earth, he had men who were always with him. Mwasomola went with him to his friend Mwakanyamata. *Mbasi* told them many things, of witchcraft, of hunger, of diseases that were to come, of the 773 776

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
FN17 Ngonde FN17

773 776 approach of the Angoni warriors, and where to flee for safety when they arrived. He asked for *bhang* and a pipe, and these were laid on the ground, and soon smoke was seen issuing from the earth. For *Mbasi* was not seen; they only heard his voice. Then he became communicative. "The Angoni are coming now," he told them, "go at once to Masoko with your wives and children and cattle." The unfortunate Mwakanyamata did as he was advised, only to be robbed of all his cattle by another friend of *Mbasi*, to whom the deceitful God sent word to have no mercy on the cattle of a fool like Mwakanyamata, who believed what he was told! And to this day Mwakanyamata is laughed at as the man who allowed himself to be deceived by the wiles of *Mbasi*.

According to another version, *Mbasi* was a rival claimant to Divine honours with *Ndorombwike* Himself. Originally he was a serpent, killed in the dim past by the chief Mwakibinga. *Mbasi* returned to earth as a spirit, seeking to persuade men to worship him, offering them wealth in cattle if they agreed. But men refused, "for the dead do not return." One chief, Mwatonoka, accepted the false God, but was defeated in battle by Mwakarobo, a final proof that *Mbasi* was a deceiver.

776 782 Stories of *Mbasi* and his activities are numerous. He used to do some of his own work; that is to say, instead of sending one of his prophets to demand what he wanted, he shouted from the great *ilisyeto* (grave of a chief; place of prayer) at Lubaga in Nserya, and made his own demands. Milk, beer,

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
FN17 Ngonde FN17

177 968 way is to give the lash to the duffers; and they claim that theirs is the more effective method of bringing all up to a high standard. But thrash the ninny to-day, and he is off to the Administrative Officer to lodge his complaint, which the latter must inquire into. And hence much deterioration.

173 773 But these are not the facts of which they wish a permanent record to be made. There are other things; things which the pagan native profoundly believes, and which Christians also believe and take pride in, though they think that the missionary will object to their holding what he probably calls silly ideas. These stories include most of the typical tales of olden times: the hero-warrior, the defier of tyrants, the mighty medicine man, the great prophet, the man who has obtained lordship over Nature in some form, and the man who controls the spirits. All these, and many more, are included among the Konde tales, and I do not place them among folk tales, for the people regard them quite differently. A folk tale is to-day, whatever it may have been in the past, either a mere diversion to pass away an idle moment, or a moral for children, or a warning for adolescents. The tales which I am thinking of are, in the native mind, records of facts, facts which they believe to be no longer achievable, but indubitably fact in the past; and no study of the native mind can be complete which does not take this into account.

I. The hero-warrior. Chungu, in his early wanderings in search of a home, came near the hil Mphande, the seat of the Simbove rulers of that day.

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
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Like the English King Alfred, he determined to be his own intelligence department, and, scouting around for the best point of attack, he came upon a woman working alone in the fields, gathering *makuka*, heaps of grass to be burned before the hoeing.

"Who," he asked the woman, "are the dwellers on that hill?"

"Are you a stranger here," she replied, "that you do not know that that is the hill of the Simbove?"

"I am going there now," said Chungu; "if they pursue me I will come to you, and you shall hide me in the grass heap. If they ask for me you shall say that you know nothing, and if they put you to the poison test, you will be acquitted."

Setting out again, Chungu crept up the stronghold of which he was soon to be master; but he was observed, and presently came rushing back to claim the woman's help. Scarce was the grass well over him ere his enemies broke in with threatening spears, demanding the immediate surrender of the spy. The woman boldly kept her secret, and the poison test having acquitted her, the Simbove set fire to the grass heap by which they were standing, and in which Chungu lay concealed, and went on in their pursuit. How Chungu escaped from the fire must be left to conjecture, but one remembers that he was "the man who speaks with God."

He now brought up a herd of elephants, which when the Simbove saw, they crowded out with spears to the kill; and the invading chief drove the elephants far off, so that all the men of warrior age were drawn away

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
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173 •773 from the defence. Next he brought up a flock of guinea-fowl, and all the old and the feeble, and the women and children, went out after them, only to be drawn away as the men were. Chungu now gave the signal to his warriors, who rushed upon the place, seized it without opposition, and beat the great drum to apprise the whole land that a new lord ruled at Mphande.

II. The defier of tyrants. Long ago there was a chief called Mwambagi. When he killed an ox, he called up all his people, bidding them cut up the animal, and cook the feast in great pots. But when all was ready, he ordered them off to their homes, and sat down to devour the food with his favourites, while the hungry people, with the savour of the well-cooked feast in their nostrils, went sadly to their homes. Next day the tyrant went round among his people.

"I hope you enjoyed the feast yesterday," he leered.

"O yes, sir," they answered, "it was very good indeed."

But there was one man, Kasanda by name, who refused to be humbugged any longer; and when one day, after the people had suffered this grievous disappointment, the chief came round to receive their hungry and disgusted plaudits, the trouble began.

"Did you enjoy the feast yesterday," demanded the chief.

"What feast?" boldly asked Kasanda. "When did you give us a feast?"

"I feasted you yesterday," said the angry tyrant.

"You may have feasted others," was the reply, "but I came back hungry."

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
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The enraged bully ordered his men to arrest and bind the rebel, and throw him over a precipice called "Ikisyo." But as he was falling over, Kasanda found that the ropes that bound him untied of their own accord; and as he rolled downwards, the precipice became a gently sloping descent, over which he fell without harm. The chief was amazed.

"How has he escaped?" he anxiously asked his attendants. But they merely shrugged their shoulders.

"Call to him," said the chief, "and tell him that I have erred."

So Kasanda, unharmed by his adventure, walked up the sloping ascent, which had been a precipice, and which became a precipice again as soon as he reached the top, where the chief and his attendants awaited him. To settle the quarrel, the chief gave his daughter to Kasanda, along with four cows, and no more demanded praise for good deeds not done. "And all the people praised Kasanda, saying, 'Thank you.' Such was the cruelty of Mwambagi, and such the courage of Kasanda."

III. The people take a pride in the great doctors of the past; for it is the doctors, and not the prophets, who are the miracle workers. The Hebrew prophets sometimes appeared to control Nature, but in all cases it was the act of God, who intervened at the prayer of the prophet. In the Konde stories the doctor does not pray for Divine intervention, nor are his acts regarded as anything but the expression of his own powers.

There were two great doctors, Kasekenye and

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
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•773 Gwasa, of equal skill, and deadly rivals in their art. One day at a beer feast, a dispute arose, in the presence of the two, as to which of them was the greater, and a challenge was issued. Gwasa made medicine, and called upon the people to observe the result. Presently the sun began to sink towards the earth, and the people cried out in terror; but at a sign from Gwasa it retreated again, and resumed its accustomed place in the heavens. It was now Kasekenye's turn. Plucking a shrub from the ground, he revealed to the astonished gaze of the people a beautiful village of the underworld, men going about, or lying in the sun, cattle feeding in the meadows, trees and rivers, hills and valleys, just as the fathers had told them of the life of the underworld. He replaced the shrub, and the vision vanished. And no man could tell which of these two wonders was the greater, that of Gwasa, or that of Kasekenye.

But trouble came upon the community. The cattle became thin, sorcerers abounded, and evil fell upon all the people; and the chief called upon the two doctors for help. Each sprinkled the ground with his chosen medicine; but Kasekenye, hoping to steal a march upon his rival, sprinkled another medicine by night. But he was punished. His body broke out into sores, and he was fain to call in his rival to cure him, and the superiority of Gwasa was acknowledged. But one minor chief was not satisfied. He called upon Gwasa to come and cure him of a pretended illness. The angry doctor, immediately perceiving the trap, threw his medicine bag against the wall of his patient's

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
FN17 Ngonde FN17

house, where it stuck, and he stalked wrathfully off. The gift of an ox calmed his wounded spirit, and he removed the medicine bag from the wall. "Then did all men know that Gwasa was a great doctor."

IV. Occasionally others besides doctors controlled aspects of Nature. Ntindi was a great prophet, without whose advice his chief would do nothing. If he told the chief to pray, the people were called, and the sacrifices offered. If he foretold smallpox, nothing could avert it, except prayer and repentance. When he foretold war, the people got ready for fight or flight as he advised. He was unlike all other men. Biting ants left him alone; bees never stung him; snakes cleared from his path. Every one admired him. From birth to death his hair was never cut, and no word of his ever fell to the ground. To this day the people protect their houses from biting ants by sprinkling earth from his grave all around, and no ant will pass that sacred barrier, for Ntindi is their lord.

Such stories are very numerous. How did they arise? It may be a vain inquiry; but at any rate they are more than mere words; they witness to something lying deep in the native mind. Were the people, or some of them, convinced that life is bigger potentially than it is in actual fact? and did they invent these stories to satisfy a craving for redemption from the commonplace? Or did they believe that there is power available for certain persons, which is denied to common men? Perhaps uncommon incidents did occur, which were worked up into their present form by unconscious literary genius. It may

8:Wilson E-5 (1934-1936)1936 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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law to all his classificatory brothers. The normal routine of life is 606
constantly interrupted by women's avoidance of these men, they crouch and hide and make wide detours to avoid them, a man comes into a room and a woman runs out hastily, a father cannot enter his son's house while his son's wives are cooking there, ceremonies are duplicated to avoid bringing them in contact. Few people seem to realize the meaning of 606
this taboo, but occasionally a man is found who tells a story which makes 773
its function abundantly clear. It is said that an old chief, long ago before the taboo was instituted, fell in love with his son's wife and took her, and such was the horror of everyone at what he had done that this taboo was instituted. This story expresses the necessity, in a society where the old men are accustomed to take the young women as wives, of guarding in some way against the possibility of a father desiring his own son's wife for himself; more particularly perhaps because the cows for her marriage have come from him.

This taboo, separating father and daughter-in-law is one of the 606
reasons for the age-village system which we must next discuss. For in 621
Nyakyusa society father and son live in different villages.

Age-Villages

The most characteristic relationships of the Nyakyusa people are 621
those which centre in the age-village. Villages and age-groups are 561
common enough in other societies, and are familiar to all of us, but it is rare to find them combined; it is very uncommon to find, as we do among the Nyakyusa, that local groups of contemporaries live together for most or all of their lives.

Age-villages are formed by groups of men, all roughly of the same age, their wives and young children. Women belong to the villages of their husbands, young children to those of their fathers. The number of households in an age-village varies, but thirty is probably a fair average. Girls, as we have seen, live at home until they marry, which they normally do soon after pubery, and then each goes to the house and joins the village of her husband. But boys, who marry later in life, leave home at about the age of ten or eleven and set up villages of their own.

(*a*) *Herd-Boys*

Between the ages of about six and eleven the boys sleep at their 857
fathers' houses and herd their fathers' cattle. This is a full-time if not a very arduous occupation; the cattle are driven out about an hour after sunrise and return to be milked about 1 p.m.; after an hour they are again driven out and do not come back until nearly sunset. The cattle of eight

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
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CHAPTER II

THE MYTHOLOGICAL CHARTER

IN Nyakyusa mythology the heroes were creators of crops and animals and were driven out from BuKinga by a jealous father (or elder brother) who sought to kill them; but he found, when they had gone, that they had taken the fertility of the country with them, so he sent offerings after them, and still such offerings are brought to their graves in sacrifice. One of the heroes, Kyala (2), created crops alone, and of him it is said that each time his father or elder brother tried to kill him he rose again; another, Lwembe or Mbasi (3 or 15?), created both crops and animals, brought cattle, fire, and iron to the Nyakyusa valley, and left many descendants who spread over the valley as chiefs, ruling a people who had not known chiefs.

The names and events mentioned vary somewhat from one area to another; in some versions there were three brothers, though the eldest, Nkekete (1), being buried in Kisi country, does not concern the Nyakyusa; in another version the brothers had a sister who was the mother of Kyungu (16), the hero of Ngonde; but the general pattern of heroic ancestors who were creators and discoverers, and who brought to the old inhabitants of the valley such good gifts as crops and stock, fire and iron, and the institution of chieftainship, remains the same. They all had miraculous power and are vaguely connected with volcanic disturbance, such as continued in the area until recent times (*vide infra*, p. 16).

Here is an account by Kikungubeja, one of the priests of BuKinga, whence the heroes came:

Nkekete (1) and Kyala (2) were brothers, Mwemusi [the first Kinga chief] killed them. Mwemusi's men tried first to kill them by cutting their throats, then by throwing them into a little lake, then by heating a great stone and throwing it on top of them. Each time Nkekete and his younger brother Kyala rose again. Then they left the country, the two of them, and the earth rumbled as they walked. Nkekete (1) went to Mbela to build; Kyala (2), the younger, to PaliKyala. Then the men of Mwemusi followed Nkekete with a cow to entreat him because he had taken all the food with him. Mwemusi was angry with him and his younger brother Kyala, because they made food and they were

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went from Mwemusi's country down the path by Mwakalukwa's to Mwakaleli. He lived a year at Lumbila and found it too cold, and thence he went to Masoko, and thence to Lubaga. All men feared him and his animals.

In another version Lwembe's survival is linked with the possession of *ifingila*, the medicine on which still, today, the authority of chiefs is thought largely to depend.

Nkekete had much food and Mwemusi killed him because he had no *ifingila*. He killed him and he rose again. 'Why don't you die?' Mwemusi asked. Nkekete replied: 'I don't know, I have nothing, I am quite alone, I have no *ifingila*.' Mwemusi killed him again and he rose, many times. Then at last Nkekete said, 'I am tired.' And he showed Mwemusi and his men a razor (*uluembe*) and said 'Kill me by cutting my throat with this', and they did and he stayed dead.

Mwemusi feared to kill Lwembe because he was very 'heavy'. He had *ifingila*, and when they tried to kill him they found his house full of animals, lions and others. . . . Once he turned himself into a stone when they tried to capture him. So Mwemusi told him to go far off, and he went with his two wives and two men, Kissoule and Kimonile. He went off riding on a lion like a donkey, with a lion behind his wives, and men were astonished when they saw him.

It is perhaps significant that Lwembe who survived is 'The Razor', by which Nkekete was killed, and the python from which *ifingila* medicine is made must be killed with razors and in no other way (*vide infra*, p. 60).

It is Lwembe's capacity to make things live and grow which is always emphasized:

Lwembe and another were given millet in their hands; Lwembe's sprouted, but not that of his fellow. He was told, 'You plant here and the other there.' The next day Lwembe's had sprouted, but not that of the other. He and his friend went to a hill in dry weather and wanted water. He just struck the earth and water came out. . . . He created leopards and kept them, and he moulded cattle of clay, he moulded them and they became cows, and his friends did the same and they remained clay.

When the heroes were driven out there was a fearful famine in BuKinga, for they had taken the fertility of the country with them, which is why, the priests say, sacrifices to them were begun by the Kinga. The priests of Lubaga were explicit on the point:

Mbasi (Lwembe 15?) came from BuKinga, he took the road to

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539 Mwakaleli and came here and died. The Kinga went to BuSangu to buy food, for there was great hunger after Mbasi and Kyala were driven out, and wandering home they came here and met Mbasi. He said, 'Go home, there will be plenty of food, but I want my things.' He had left them at his father's place when he fled with his sister Kyungu. He asked for his leopard and otterskins, his drums, his bows for shooting birds,[1] his harp, mats, a stool, bamboo beer, and twenty hoes. . . . Then the Kinga went back and found their country full of food; and they brought all his things to Mbasi and even things like salt that he had not asked for. . . . This is how the ritual began. . . . Mbasi ruled because he had helped them in their hunger.

173 773 Kasitile (86), the rain-maker, speaking of the same incident, stressed only the hoes. Lwembe 'came to Lubaga and found a good place to settle, then he sent out messengers to Mwemusi (the Kinga chief) and said: "I want my hoes, especially my great, eyed hoe" (*ilikumbulu ilya maso*).' (The old ritual hoes had perforations—'eyes'—on the blades comparable to the perforations on other rain-making instruments.) Still today Kinga priests [778] [782] come to Lubaga to sacrifice to Lwembe (3), and they bring with them hoes.[2]

The hero of Ngonde, the Kyungu (16), was also associated with [643] iron implements which he had brought with him—a spear, staff, stool, and a sieve used for making rain, which were royal insignia, and razors, spears, and knives of an unusual pattern, which long remained in the groves of the hero and his successors.

In the commonly-told Nyakyusa myth it was Lwembe who [372] introduced fire to BuNyakyusa—'he found the original occupants eating their food raw'—and the fact that he conferred so great a benefit is the charter for the position of the chiefs, celebrated at every 'coming out'. The Kinga priests push the spread of fire back a little further.

539 372 Of old in this country [BuKinga] there was no fire, men ate food uncooked; there were very few men in the country, most of it was forest. This was after Mwemusi came to Kinga country. Then one man, a hunter, went into the forest to hunt buck and otter, and he had dogs. And in the forest he made fire with a drill and cooked his food; and gave his friends cooked food to eat, and they were astonished.

[1] The bow and arrow are not now used among the Nyakyusa, but men in their thirties had used them when boys, for shooting birds.

[2] cf. Ludwig Weichert, *Mayibuye i Afrika/ Kehre wieder Afrika* (Berlin, 1927), p. 109, for a photograph of one.

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Then the chiefs took it from him and spread it through the Kinga country . . . and to the Mahasi, the Ndali, the Nyakyusa. . . . It was taken to BuNyakyusa before Lwembe went, when he was a child, before the killing of Nkekete and Kyala.

In the version told by Mwandisi (107), the old blind chief of MuNgonde, the various events of the cycle are rather differently combined; there were three brothers in BuKinga, Lyambilo (12) or Ngutike, Kyala, and Mbasi, and a sister, Kyumba. Lyambilo discovered how to make fire with a fire drill. Kyala was clever at making food—maize and millet—and Mbasi was clever at making animals—cattle, lions, elephants.

Then Lyambilo, the eldest, was angry that his younger brothers should be so clever; he was jealous. First he made war on Kyala, he wounded him once, but he did not die; then he wounded him again, but still he didn't die; then the third time Lyambilo put a stone in the fire and made it hot and threw it at Kyala, and he died, and was thrown into the Lake. But as soon as he died there was a great famine, no rain fell and no food grew. So they had to pray to Kyala to give them rain, and they killed a cow to sacrifice to Kyala. And as soon as they had done this much food grew.

Still Lyambilo was jealous of Mbasi because he could make animals. But when he went to kill him he found so many animals with him, roaring lions, and elephants, that he was afraid and he ran away. And he brought some hoes to Mbasi to say he was sorry for having tried to kill him. Then Mbasi moved from BuKinga to the Nyakyusa hills (Mwamba). . . . Lyambilo stayed in BuKinga. . . . Mbasi came down to the plain on a visit and went back to the hills, but his sister Kyumba stayed down here and married a man and bore a son. Before she came there was no fire here, she brought fire, and so they called her son Kyungu in honour of his mother because she brought fire.

When Mbasi was at Masukulu (in the hills) he made one cow, but it soon died; then he moved to Mbambo and made another cow and this soon died; then he went to Lubaga (which is still called Mbasi) and there he made one cow again which bore many many calves, and he divided his cattle among his sons. . . . Mbasi was Lwembe.

In Ngonde tradition the first Kyungu (16) was a man, descendant of Ngulube the Kinga chief, and he travelled with three brothers and a sister westwards, passing south of Rungwe volcano, where he and his immediate successor were buried, one of them on Kieyo mountain. Their descendants went on to the 'country of the Bisa', then returned eastward to Mbande, the sacred hill which the Kyungu took from a Fipa hunter, Simbobwe. Like Lwembe,

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the Kyungu had a miraculous power of creating animals and it was by making elephants, buffaloes, and guinea-fowl for Simbobwe and his men to hunt, and climbing Mbande when it was deserted, that he captured it. Directly he reached the top he struck his drum and 'when Simbobwe heard the drums beaten on the hill he fled to his own country'. This Kyungu's successors on Mbande became 'divine kings' with miraculous power much like that of the Lwembe at Lubaga. One of his brothers became chief of the Namwanga; another of the Iwa; and a third became the rival of his sister's son for the chieftainship of the Lambya. Such is the Ngonde account. The Kukwe say that the Kyungus of Ngonde come from the same line as the chiefs of Kabale, while the men of Lwembe insist that he was descended from a daughter of their line (*vide supra*, p. 2). What connexion existed between the lineages of Lwembe and Ngomale is uncertain, but the assumption is that they, together with the chiefs of the Pangwa and Kisi, sprang from a common stock in BuKinga.

The commonest story of origin is that all the peoples of the area, save the Sangu, emerged from a 'dark house' (*nyumba nditu*) near the present Njombe, and came to Ilongo (KwiLongo) in the forest, in what is now Bena country. Nsamba, a Nyakyusa priest of the chief's lineage, with a reputation as a historian, spoke of a 'few men' coming from 'a rocky shore to the north-west' (Lake Tanganyika?) and travelling to the east shore of Nyasa, where they increased in numbers, and then spread northwards through BuKinga; Mwenifumbo, a noble of Ngonde, spoke of Ngulube the 'pale' having come to BuKinga 'from the north'.[1] But the Kinga priests knew nothing of the 'rocky shore' or northern origin; and if we take the direction in which the corpse faces when buried (the most certain criterion of the direction of origin) then the Nyakyusa and Ngonde people came from BuKinga, some travelling to the north of Rungwe volcano and some to the south, and the Kinga themselves came from the east.

Other evidence also indicates that the chiefs came from the east or north-east rather than the north-west. The cattle they brought were the short-horned Zebu type, like those of the Masai and other peoples of central and eastern Tanganyika and Kenya. They are quite different from the long-horned cattle of the Hima

[1] Godfrey Wilson, *The Constitution of Ngonde*, Rhodes-Livingstone Papers No. 3, p. 10 (1939). According to the Ngonde version, Ngulube was the *first* ancestor, but Nsamba began the genealogy four generations earlier (*vide* chart, facing p. 3).

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and Tutsi who established conquest states to the north-west.[1]

Whatever the origin and adventures of the heroes they were important in Nyakyusa and Ngonde history because their graves became centres of religious ritual which linked together groups that were otherwise largely independent. The myths about them are the charter for chieftainship. They are depicted as benefactors who brought to uncivilized men not only the institution of chieftainship itself, but fire, cattle, iron, seed, and a creative power resident in their own bodies and those of their anointed heirs. But the myths also justify the power of commoners who first occupied the country and who have witchcraft in their bellies:

> The commoners whom Lwembe found here were extraordinary. They were cultivators, but they had not yet got fire, they ate their food raw. It was we chiefs, it was Lwembe, who brought fire and cattle—he came and found the original occupants without cattle; hence the commoners say, 'We are the earth'. Commoners are different from us physically, they are black; they are awe-inspiring, they are witches. Before you Europeans came the chiefs like Mwaipopo (116) were not awe-inspiring, they feared the commoners very much; the commoners hammered the chief with their fists—yes, by daylight. And if the chief cut a man's bananas that man took the chief's. If the commoners were angry with Mwaipopo they fetched Mwangomo (124 whose chiefdom adjoins Mwaipopo's) at night by their witchcraft; he came in the night with his people and seized the cattle, both those of the chief, Mwaipopo, and those of the commoners. The next day the commoners said: 'It is we, we are angry. Why do you not look after us? Why do you not kill cattle for us?' Then Mwaipopo would kill two head of cattle and all the men in the country ate. . . . Mwaipopo and his equals were not awe-inspiring long ago, it is you Europeans who have created chieftainship and awe.

[1] cf. H. H. Curson and R. W. Thornton, 'A Contribution to the Study of African Native Cattle', *Onderstepoort Journal of Veterinary Science and Animal Industry*, vii, 2 October 1936 (Government Printer, Pretoria). An analysis of the distribution and migration of breeds in Africa.

H. B. Thompson and R. Scott, *Uganda* (1935), pp. 195 ff.

Fülleborn, *op. cit.*, pl. 68: 69.

M. Merker, *Die Masai*, pp. 157 ff., 1904, Berlin.

H. H. Johnston, *The Uganda Protectorate*, 1904, pp. 86, 103 (early photographs of Nyoro cattle).

The short-horn type predominates among the Nyakyusa, but some animals suggest an intermixture with Sanga cattle. The hump is regarded as a great delicacy and is exaggerated in the clay cattle which boys model. Cf. Fülleborn, *op. cit.*, pl. 72. The similarity between the ritual and symbolism of the Nyakyusa and those of the Ganda as described by Roscoe is marked. J. Roscoe, *The Baganda*, 1911.

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173 The balance between chiefs and commoners is explicit. So
● 773 also is their dependence on *both* cultivation and herding, and it
[643] should be noted that, though the Nyakyusa speak of themselves
[733] as stock men, they are not pastoralists to the same extent as the Masai or the Nuer. The number of cattle in Rungwe District today is less than half the human population, and men traditionally have done the heaviest share of cultivation.

773 In every version of the myth the tension between father and
593 son, or older and younger brother, is stressed. In Nyakyusa
561 society the father (or his eldest son who replaces him) controls
173 the family property and exacts obedience from his juniors who
[769] continue to show their respect after his death by sacrifices. The tale of Kyala and Lwembe celebrates the triumph of the junior. Thus, at the heart of the very ritual which sanctifies seniority there is the assertion of the victory of the son and younger brother. The myth expresses the aspirations of subordinates—of commoners and junior kinsmen—as well as the power of chiefs and seniors.

173 As we have already noted, the heroic cycle makes no reference
773 to the peculiar Nyakyusa institution of age-villages. Their charter
561 is a quite separate myth[1] which tells of a chief who looked on his
621 daughter-in-law and loved her and took her, and this so shocked
606 men that in future fathers and sons built separately, so that a father-in-law should never see his daughter-in-law.

There are other hints of the eternal theme. Besides the saga of
173 Lwembe there is another quite different tale of the origin of fire,
773 which is less often related. In it a girl who had angered her father
372 by breaking his drinking calabash fled from BuKinga to the Nyakyusa valley, where she found people who ate their food raw. She made fire and cooked for them and 'all women came to her to learn to cook'. The long-necked calabash, used as a drinking
[415] vessel and in prayer to the shades, is a man's most personal
[768] possession destroyed at his death, and it stands for a husband, while cooking is a symbol of the sexual activity of women, so the myth is perhaps a drama of incest, but we have no direct evidence of this.

173 This last is the only tale in which a woman appears as a
773 benefactor. In general, the mythology is that of a strongly
562 patrilineal society in which men are dominant. The wives of Lwembe who walked behind their lord, shepherded by a lion,

[1] cf. Monica Wilson, *Good Company*, p. 85.

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are remembered, and the names of the two senior wives of a chief are often recited in genealogies because the heirs take their names from their mothers, but she-who-taught-cooking is the only heroine in her own right.

It is worth noting also that the rituals of kinship are linked neither with the heroic tradition nor with primeval incest. We could trace no myths regarding their beginning, save that concerning the origin of avoidance between father and daughter-in-law. The myth of the origin of death is a variation on the theme, so familiar in Bantu-speaking Africa, of the two messengers (a sheep and a dog in this version) sent to men by 'Kyala', one promising life, the other death. It provides no charter for the ritual.

And what of the relation between myth and history? The conquest of cultivators by cattle-keepers is the common theme of traditions in the lacustrine area, and it is quite possible that small groups of invaders, who brought with them iron tools and weapons and cattle, established themselves as chiefs over small unorganized groups of hunters and cultivators in an isolated valley three or four centuries ago.[1] The Nyakyusa valley and the plain of Ngonde have no iron ore, and the inhabitants were dependent, until the coming of the Europeans, on iron (*ikyela*) smelted in the hills to the east for weapons and tools.[2] The original inhabitants are said to have used wooden hoes exclusively—such hoes were still in common use in 1938[3]—so the myth of a Lwembe sending to BuKinga for iron hoes has a firm foundation in historical fact. But that the original inhabitants of the valley did not know the use of fire 300 or 400 years ago (when Lwembe arrived) is incredible. Here the record of one of the greatest events in history is fitted into the shallow time-scale of an isolated people. To them it is not *when* fire arrived that is really important, but *who* brought it; chiefs are chiefs to the Nyakyusa (as to other peoples in Africa) by virtue of this great benefit they brought to men.

[1] Namwanga tradition (recorded in the Mbeya District Book) tells of the introduction of iron fifteen generations ago. The Sangu tradition says that a tall, pale man from 'Somaliland' first brought iron spear-heads to BuSangu and his son established a hegemony by virtue of his superior weapons.

[2] cf. Monica Wilson, *Good Company*, p. 7. The iron deposits on the Livingstone mountains have recently been investigated by the Colonial Development Corporation. A 'titaniferous iron mountain' in the south of Njombe District was found to be 'smeltable'. *Tanganyika: Annual Reports of the Provincial Commissioners*, 1951, p. 51.

[3] Wilson, *op. cit.*, plate VII.

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It is surprising to westerners, whose whole framework of reference is shaped by the conception of historical time, that the heroic myth is not more explicitly dated by the volcanic eruptions known to have taken place near Lubaga,[1] but to the Nyakyusa the sequence of events does not appear important except in so far as it determines seniority.

Nowadays, with the changing form of the society, there develops a new mythology. Kyala is described by younger men as a creator, apart and distinct from any hero or ancestor, and they reject any suggestion that he was once on a footing with Lwembe and Kyungu. The more conservative fit Christian names into the heroic myth. One version goes as follows:

> Kyala had two sons, Kyala the elder who was Mbasi or Satano, and Kyala the younger who was Jesus. Kyala the younger made corn, and cattle, and fire, and cooked meat, and men ate; then Mbasi or Satano was furious because his younger brother was outdoing him, and killed him, and became the only one.

Here the traditional theme of the jealousy of the senior is dominant, but generally it is the power of the heroes over fertility, under the old dispensation, that is stressed.

Many people tell today of old prophecies concerning the coming of Europeans and of the triumph of a new religion. To the Christians these provide some bridge between the past and the present, for they interpret the words of pagan prophets as evidence of their foreknowledge of a truth they had not yet been taught.

[1] D. A. Harkin, 'The Sarabwe Lava Flow, Kiejo, Rungwe District', *Tanganyika Notes and Records*, September 1955, suggests that the most recent eruption in the district, that of Kiejo, took place about 1800, but this conclusion is based on the description of the eruption by *one* man, and the statement that his great grandfather witnessed it. That *some* ancestor of Andulile Kajigiri witnessed the eruption is likely, but had it taken place only three generations ago it might be expected that other families also would have had a tradition of the event. Kiejo is clearly visible from Mwaipopo's country and had the eruption taken place early in the nineteenth century either the chief Mwakagile (59) or his father Mwamukinga (43) must have observed it. Their descendants are emphatic that there is no tradition of their having done so, though it is commonly known that an eruption of Kiejo occurred in the distant past.

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CHAPTER III

THE 'DIVINE KINGS'

(a) CHARACTERISTICS OF 'DIVINE KINGS'

THE heroic myths and genealogies proclaim the origin of chieftainship, and point to a distinction between ordinary chiefs and those we call 'divine kings'. Two remote ancestors who were pre-eminent are worshipped as heroes and creators, their graves are centres at which a large number of chiefdoms join in celebration, and living representatives are selected in every generation bearing their names. These are the 'divine kings', the Lwembe of Lubaga (in the centre of Nyakyusa country) and the Kyungu of Mbande near Karonga in Nyasaland. A third hero, Kyala, is associated with the cave, PaliKyala, near Ikombe at the north-east corner of the Lake, and he is worshipped in the same way as the other two, except that the priest of the cave is not his descendant and does not embody him. According to the myth, Kyala was the brother of Lwembe, but died without issue. However, the word for chiefs—*aba-nya-fyale*—is popularly believed to mean 'the sons of Kyala'.[1]

Kyala is one hero among others, but his name is *also* used in the sense of 'the lord': a chief is *kyala gwake* (his lord) to a commoner, a father is *kyala gwake* to his son or daughter 'because he created him' and a shade is *kyala* to his living kinsman (*unsyuka jo kyala*). Of one who performs a feat—something difficult—it is said 'he is Kyala'.[2] This usage is said to be very old, but there is yet another meaning of the word which is new. *Kyala* was used by the European missionaries (who first established themselves near PaliKyala) as their translation of 'God'. Today these three conceptions are inextricably mixed: Kyala the hero, Kyala 'the

[1] I am indebted to the Reverend Paul Fueter for drawing my attention to this point. It is doubtful whether *Kyala* and *fyale* in fact come from the same root. *Fyale* in Hehe means the daughter of a chief (A. G. O. Hodgson, 'Some Notes on the Wahehe of Mahenge District', *J.R.A.I.*, lvi (1926), p. 40). In Bena *nyakiyara* means 'my husband's father or mother' (A. T. and G. M. Culwick, *Ubena of the Rivers*, p. 196). In Ganda *mukyala* means 'lady', mistress of a household and garden (J. Roscoe, *The Baganda*, p. 44). cf. Nyika, *fiala* 'to beget, to bear' (J. L. Krapf and J. Rebmann, *A Nyika-English Dictionary*, edited by T. H. Sparshott, 1887).

[2] cf. F. R. Lehmann, 'Some field notes on the Nyakyusa', *Sociologus*, New Series, 1951, vol. 5, p. 66.

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area, the Penja, have a grove, Lukata, where they worship their founding ancestor, and the Nyika living on the west bank of the Kiwira river have their grove, Lubaga, twenty miles or more from the Lubaga in Selya and unconnected with it. A third distinct group, the Saku, who were the first inhabitants of the south-eastern part of Rungwe District, have their own grove, Nkeso, where their progenitors Mwamakula and Mwalukinge were buried. None of these has anything like the prestige and sanctity of the Lwembe or the Kyungu, but they are probably the prototype from which the 'divine kings' developed.

What circumstances produced a 'divine king' at Lubaga and not (so far as our limited knowledge goes) at Kabale we do not know, but we can show how the 'divine kingship' at Mbande, near the Lake shore, developed rather differently from the originally similar institution at Lubaga which is forty miles from the Lake. The Kyungu gradually acquired political power in a way in which the Lwembe did not. Among the Nyakyusa the 'sons of Lwembe' spread through the country establishing themselves as independent chiefs. They acknowledged the mystical supremacy of the Lwembe, and sent cattle to him to sacrifice, but they were sovereigns in their own territories. Just what this mystical supremacy of Lwembe implied was and still is often a matter of dispute, as we shall see. On the death of a chief his country was normally divided into two independent sections, each ruled by one of his sons. One heir sometimes fought the other and reduced him to a subordinate position, but the number of independent chiefdoms appears to have increased fairly steadily, and their size did not diminish in proportion, for the Nyakyusa chiefs have been expanding their area of occupation over a long period, establishing themselves as rulers over scattered and unorganized peoples with less developed techniques than their own, or colonizing unoccupied forest country. Expansion into uncultivated forest is still going on (1955), and were it not for the vigilance of the British Administration it is almost certain that the Safwa people would have been conquered and absorbed like the Penja, Lugulu, and others before them.[1] In 1936 over 100 independent chiefdoms were recognized by the people themselves, and they varied in size from 100 to 3,000 adult men.

In Ngonde the development was different. In the early period all the sons of the Kyungu, save two, were killed, and the territorial

[1] cf. Monica Wilson, *Good Company*, p. 4.

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looking for me", and so if there was much heat he would send rain.' But this no longer happens.

At the same time both pagans and Christians tell a myth of how a European missionary, Rev. — Jauer (Mwaisumo), who visited the grove of Lubaga intending to remove the hoes in the grove to demonstrate the falsehood of the ritual, was confounded by a miracle (*ifika*).

Once the missionary Mwaisumo wished to go and see the grove of Lubaga. He was warned that if he entered he would flee because there were many marvels there, and the rain would catch him. He said: 'Oh, I shall go, nothing will happen.' So he went and entered the grove, and he found many hoes, some standing up, some lying down, and some of them had 'eyes'. He seized one to take it away, then there was a crash of thunder, and he was afraid and fled. When he ran out of the grove the rain fell in torrents. It is said that he was so frightened he left his jacket behind. From that time people said that indeed there are miracles at Lubaga.

'European times' is given as the reason for sacrifices being less frequent and regular than formerly. The occasions were, and still are: any period of hunger or scarcity, such as the Kinga regularly experience during the dry season, and the Nyakyusa also complain of at that time; any irregular misfortune such as a failure of the rains, a plague of locusts or an epidemic; and any prediction of hunger or disease by a prophet (*unsololi* or *unkunguluka*). But the chiefs are said to be more reluctant to provide the cattle for sacrifice than formerly, and less quickly influenced by the actual occurrence of hunger or by prophecy that famine is imminent. Nevertheless they still 'treat the earth' (*ukutendekesya umfu*) by sending a black cow to Lubaga when hunger presses.

According to Kasitile (86) and Mwamakunda (his fellow priest) no ritual could be performed in the grove of the first Lwembe when he had no living representative. Formerly, the Kissoule in office and another priest penetrated alone, and there bound a live sheep and left it to bleat until a python took it. 'It is Kyala, he turns himself into a python' (*Jo kyala: ipela sota*). Here Kasitile used *kyala* in the sense of 'the lord' and he was referring to Lwembe. According to another informant, when the heir to any priesthood connected with Lubaga is installed he should sleep in the grove enclosed in a stout wicker hut, and remain there until the python of the grove comes and *licks* him. The case was cited of a priest who had lain captive for two weeks

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CHAPTER XI

NYAKYUSA COSMOLOGY

772 We can now piece together, from myth and ritual, the traditional Nyakyusa view of their universe. They have no elaborated system of ideas and the synthesis which follows is more systematic than any uneducated Nyakyusa would formulate.

773 The origin of men was a 'dark house', located high on the Livingstone plateau, and from here the Nyakyusa themselves, and people familiar to them, are thought to have sprung, but there is a hint of the first of the heroes having come 'from the north', and there is also the contradictory notion that the heroes were creators. 'It was Kyala who made us in the beginning with iron ore'; 'Kyala [776] is the smith who forges us'; 'Mbasi is the smith who forges us'; 'Lwembe made Mumfu out of clay to be the father of commoners'. But all are agreed that Lwembe (or Mbasi) was the ancestor of the chiefs and no clear distinction is made between creator and progenitor.

Crops and animals and fire were distributed by the heroes. Of their first creation or invention there is no tale for, though Lwembe created animals, he was already a herd-boy when he did so. Moreover, the 'owners of the soil' in the Nyakyusa valley had some crops before Lwembe came bringing them others, together with cattle and fire; but which were the indigenous crops of the valley and which the new is not discussed. If contradictions between the various myths are pointed out they are explained, like divergences in ritual, in terms of differing origin: 'It is the Lambya people to the west who say that cattle came out of an anthill, and the Nyakyusa proper who say they were brought by Lwembe', and so on. Differentiation is epitomized and accounted for by the separation of lineages.

[778] The heroes had a creative force in their own persons, which is inherited by their descendants, the divine kings, and, in a lesser degree, the chiefs; as in Egypt 'the King's potency is felt in the very body and person of each of his subjects'.[1] That potency is partly innate in the royal line, but it is nourished by the use of medicines of which the greatest are reserved to rulers. Vigour is

[1] H. Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, p. 60.

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thought to be embedded in the visibly growing parts of the body of a chief, and the horrifying practice of plucking out the hair and nails of a dying man is an assertion of the value of vitality, energy, force of personality in a leader.

The separate origin of chiefs and people, and the reciprocity between them, are constantly emphasized. Among many primitive peoples a myth of common origin is the charter for unity, and foreign lineages are linked by some fiction to the dominant line; but among the Nyakyusa it is the *reciprocity* between cultivators and cattle-owners, between 'owners of the soil' who ate their food raw and immigrants who brought with them cattle and fire, which is the basis of unity. The chiefs (like the descendants of the Pilgrim Fathers or the Voortrekkers) speak of themselves as having brought civilization to a savage land, but they acknowledge the contribution of the previous 'owners of the soil' in a way in which the white Americans and South Africans do not. Characteristically, the dichotomy of chiefs and commoners is couched in terms of descent, but in fact this is a fiction, for the younger sons of chiefs join the ranks of the commoners, and the mother of a chief is often of commoner origin.

The complementary character of the economies of chiefs and commoners is matched, in belief, by a balance in mystical power. The divine kings have an innate creative power while the commoners have pythons in their bellies with which to destroy their enemies. It sounds like a myth of good and evil put about by the chiefs, but we never heard it expressed in that way even by Kasitile, who so feared and hated the commoner priests. The destructive power of the commoners can be used morally, to maintain the established order, as well as irresponsibly by witches. The constitution was a balance between chiefs and commoners, not a dictatorship. Chiefs maintain their position by feasting their men on beef, and this, the Nyakyusa think, prevents the witches from attacking; sated with meat their pythons 'lie quiet'.

Ultimate power is symbolized by the python, for though the chiefs—like English kings—are commonly associated with lions and leopards, the terror of the grove of Lubaga, and the source of the *ifingila* medicine upon which the potency of divine kings and chiefs depends is a python, like that which lies in the belly of a witch. The most fearful thing of the tropical forest (and the forests on the Livingstone escarpment and Rungwe mountain are but the remains of much greater ones) is a natural symbol for power.

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is illustrated in the references made by priests to the python which appears in Lwembe's grove as *kyala* (*vide supra*, pp. 29, 33). This python is 'the lord', Lwembe.

Nowadays Kyala is spoken of as a first cause—the origin of death, and of social institutions, as well as the creator of life. The current version of the myth of the origin of death begins: 'When Kyala created the country and the people at the beginning there was no death. Then he thought there should be death and life. He asked people to choose between life and death, and they cho-- life.' And when men are asked the reason for a custom or ritual they may answer 'Kyala made us so', 'Kyala made us black people like that'.

Since Kyala is nowadays regarded as the creator of the natural order he is often blamed for the intractability of things—the log that splits, the lorry that skids. Once a vendor of very small potatoes said, when the buyer complained of the size, 'Kyala gave them to us like this', only to be jeered at by the onlookers who admonished him: 'Had you cultivated better they would have been larger.'

Much of the material quoted is susceptible of the interpretation that Kyala is an overriding power to which the shades, witches, and medicines are subject. 'The medicine will be effective if Kyala wills'; 'rain will fall when the rain-maker soaks his stones if Kyala wills'; 'when the doctor treats the tails they "vomit" (froth over), then if Kyala has helped us the cattle give much milk'. Even in 1935 conservatives like Kasitile sometimes expressed such beliefs, but they did not do so consistently. Their preoccupation was with other forces and acknowledgment of Kyala seemed to be tacked on almost as an afterthought. This came out very clearly in Kasitile's session with the diviner who, fearing the presence of a European, gave 'Kyala' as the cause of Kasitile's disease, and Kasitile rejected the verdict saying: 'Kyala never stands alone.'

The influence of Christian teaching on pagan thought was already considerable in 1935—Kasitile added 'Jesus' and 'the Holy Spirit' to the shades invoked—and we believe the mention of Kyala in many of the pagan prayers at that date to have been due to Christian influence. The idea of a supreme power is accepted very readily *as an addition* to the belief in the shades, the witches, and medicines, though it does not easily replace them altogether. By 1955 the shift in emphasis was clear. Besides Kyala 'the lord' of a commoner or junior, and Kyala the hero who is worshipped at

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his cave and who, though a creator, is equalled by other heroes and dwells in the bowels of the earth, there was Kyala an ultimate power and first cause, unique and omnipotent, who dwelt in heaven 'above'. The implications of *kumwanya* (above) have changed along with the implications of *Kyala*.

The new balance between the different elements in pagan thought was reflected in everyday speech. In the 1930's men spoke constantly of the shades (*abasyuka*), the witches (*abalosi*), and 'the breath of men' (*imbepo sya bandu*); Kyala did not figure much in the conversation of pagans. But in 1955, from the moment when the bus I arrived in skidded off the road and the passengers began assuring each other that *Kyala alimo* (God is present), because no one had been injured, I heard the name constantly. Such a change is hard to prove, but the impression of a marked shift in emphasis was strong.

The conception of the hero Mbasi has also radically altered. During the years before 1914 a man, with two boys in attendance, posed as Mbasi and went round Selya by night, growling in a gruff voice that he was Mbasi, and seizing cattle and fowls and food. He was eventually taken by night, by some Christians, and died after seven months' imprisonment in Tukuyu. Today the Christians never use 'Mbasi' for God, but sometimes identify him with 'Satan', and the pagans use 'Lwembe' rather than 'Mbasi'.

The range of relationships in space was narrow in the traditional Nyakyusa society, and the range of relationship in time was correspondingly so. Only a limited number of chiefdoms co-operated in sacrifice to a hero (and often they seem to have acted separately, rather than in concert), and all historical time was contained in the genealogies depicted. There was a dawn when men ate food raw and lived without fire, or cattle, or chiefs, but history began when the heroes descended from the mountains, ten or twelve generations ago. Time was telescoped when all the known world lay within 100 miles.

A social revolution occurred once, with the coming of the chiefs, but then time stood still, and ever since the heroic age has remained the pattern of right behaviour. Departure from the rituals laid down spells madness and death, for 'Kyala created us so'. Part of primeval reality is the conflict of generations expressed in the myth of the seduction of a young wife by her husband's father, in the rules of avoidance, and in the ritual of the 'coming out'. There is no convention of fighting on this last occasion (as

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among some other peoples with a corresponding ritual), but the young men seize cattle belonging to the older generation, thus asserting their authority. The opposition of generations is taken for granted and given expression in constitutional form: the ritual is a celebration not of 'rebellion' but of growth. For all their reluctance to hand over power the fathers 'rejoice and are glad because their sons have grown up'. Change in the structure of society after the revolution of the heroic age, is not celebrated, and is scarcely admitted, but the process of growth, of death and procreation, is expressed in every ritual. Indeed, the ritual cycle is like a fugue with the theme of death and rebirth constantly recurring.

The pagan universe is just and orderly. There is a nemesis attached to spilling blood or binding a man with ropes. The anger of men,[1] or of the shades who are roused by men, is what brings most misfortune, and often, the Nyakyusa think, such anger is justified. Even medicines may be selective, injuring only the guilty. The good man who celebrates the proper rituals, fulfils his kinship obligations, and keeps on good terms with his neighbours, is protected, while the evil-doer falls ill. But some evil men, witches and sorcerers, attack the innocent out of jealousy and spite. Evil to the Nyakyusa, lies primarily within men: it is 'anger in the heart' which materializes as pythons that throttle others. Because they are aware of angry impulses in themselves the Nyakyusa find it difficult to believe that any society without witchcraft can exist; to say that there is no *ubulosi* is like suggesting that there is no ill will or anger in a community. And since anger brings misfortune there is an obligation on those whose anger might have caused sickness or ill luck to express goodwill by spitting or blowing out water, and saying, 'May the patient recover' or 'I am without anger'. Among commoners the man required to show goodwill is usually a senior relative, rather than a suspected witch (as among the Azande). But a neighbour or friend who might be a witch or sorcerer should also express goodwill when he visits the sick, and fellow hunters who have ill luck may stop to declare their goodwill to one another, as we have seen. If a chief or priest-chief is sick the village headmen and priests must wish him well and confess any anger they have felt towards him. The blowing out of water is a symbol of confession, 'bringing

[1] For a full account of the belief in witchcraft and the 'breath of men', cf. Monica Wilson, *Good Company*, pp. 91-121, 198-261.

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swept through BuNyakyusa in the early 1930's; perhaps other similar movements preceded it—we do not know. What is clear is that traditionally there was continuous public pressure to overcome hatred within the village and the kinship group; to rid oneself of it by confession and an expression of goodwill. In pagan thought Utopia is a society without witches or sorcerers and, though it was never achieved, everyone is convinced that formerly these evil-doers were fewer than now, because they were restrained by law, whereas 'witches' now go scot-free.

The interests of the Nyakyusa are personal and practical. Health, fertility, and amity between kinsmen and neighbours are what they seek. It is with rain and drought, with the rise of the Lake or the striking of lightning which destroys property; with stock, crops, and the wild animals which prey upon them that the myths are concerned. We could trace no tales of the sun, moon, and stars, and no rituals are directed to them. Reference is made to volcanic disturbance in the myths of the heroes—'the ground rumbled' when Nkekete and Kyala walked, and there are stories of small lakes disappearing and reappearing elsewhere—but the concern shown is surprisingly little if an eruption indeed destroyed villages last century as Mr. Harkin's single informant suggests (*vide supra*, p. 16).

Reality is thought to be revealed to men in dreams, by prophets who 'go down thinking like the roots of a tree' to the world of the shades, and by oracles. What men seek to know are the causes of misfortune—public and private—and the identity of witches. Occasionally, it is said, a prophet has looked into the future and foretold drought, or flood, or the coming of Europeans—'white things on the Lake'—against whom it would be foolish to fight, but for the most part they are concerned with the misfortunes that exist, and urging men to pray in the groves. The contemplative is not honoured in Nyakyusa tradition; the man of spiritual power is a detective—a discoverer of evil-doers—or an administrator whose awfulness adds to his authority.

Men are preoccupied with their relationships to other living men—their kinsmen, neighbours, and fellow office-holders—and with their dead fathers. They are not concerned with their relationship to Kyala. The rituals celebrated by kinsmen are directed to the shades not to any supreme God, and it is quarrelling between kinsmen that angers the shades and makes the celebration of certain rituals necessary. The communal rituals are

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CHAPTER XIV

RELIGION AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE

182 In this chapter we shall seek to show how the traditional communal rituals both reflect and maintain the traditional political structure, and to consider in what measure the change from paganism to Christianity compels a change in other aspects of the society, or, alternatively, how far the economic and political changes taking place among the Nyakyusa compel a change in religion.

182 The heroic myths are the charter for chieftainship. The heroes
773 from whom the chiefs are descended are pictured as creators and benefactors, the authors of fertility and civilized living. But myth
769 and ritual also entrench the rights of commoners and unify people of different stocks by asserting their complementary diversity.
643 No ritual can be celebrated without the participation of commoner priests. They 'speak out' at rituals and bring public opinion directly to bear on the chief, whose own health is held to depend upon their goodwill; at the same time the whole country looks to the chief as the source of fertility in man and beast and field.

182 Ritual was the integrating force with the widest range in the
643 traditional society. Independent chiefs, even those whose people were culturally as different as the Nyakyusa and Kinga, joined in
796 sacrifice to Lwembe and Kyala and were mystically dependent upon one another. As Kasitile put it 'the Kinga come (to Lubaga)
782 both when there is trouble in our land and in theirs'. In Ngonde the 'divine king', the Kyungu, who controlled a flourishing trade in ivory, developed secular as well as ritual functions and emerged as a paramount chief, but in the Nyakyusa valley the ritual bond had no secular backing save the exchange of iron and salt for food, which linked Kinga and Nyakyusa in a tenuous partnership. The sacrifices to the Lwembe did not exclude war between chiefs who acknowledged him, nor did sacrifice to their common ancestor exclude war between Mwaipopo (116) and Mwaihojo (147), but the necessity of co-operation in sacrifice compelled later reconciliation. Perhaps the insistence on the sacredness of the heroes and their living representatives, the elaborate ritual of

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chieftainship, and the dependence upon medicines as a means of enforcing law were connected with the ineffectiveness of secular authority. Certainly the Kyungu's emergence from seclusion, and the dropping of the taboos which surrounded him were connected with his acquisition of economic power; but we know too little of the conditions that make for elaboration of ritual to postulate any general connexion between the absence of ritual in public life and the effectiveness of secular authority.

The cycle of sacrifices to the heroes and dead chiefs among the Nyakyusa is more than an ancestor cult, for it includes non-relatives among its priests and beneficiaries; but it has many of the features of an ancestor cult, among them the identification of piety with conservatism. A good man follows exactly in the footsteps of his father who becomes his god. This is reconciled with a myth of a new beginning, ten generations ago, when civilized life came to the Nyakyusa valley, and the new beginning is celebrated each generation with the 'coming out' of the young chief and his contemporaries.

All Nyakyusa rituals are cathartic in the sense that they make explicit and seek to dissipate, by their very expression and rejection, certain anti-social tendencies. In the Nyakyusa view the root of evil is 'anger in the heart' unadmitted and corrosive, and only by an open confession can it be overcome.[1] Hence in every situation of misfortune, public or private, men are pressed to 'speak out' (*ukusosya*) and admit their anger. At the 'coming out' the conflict of generations is expressed in the prolonged debate over the date of the celebration and the detailed arrangements, and in the dancing and slaughter of cattle, and is finally resolved when authority and land are handed over to the young men by their fathers. The fissiparous tendencies of a chiefdom are made explicit and canalized in constitutional form by the division of the old chief's country into two, under his senior sons; and criticism of the young chiefs is made explicit in the formal admonition by the father's village headmen. The rejection of conflict is clearest at the annual purification when men throw out the ashes contaminated by family bickering and the cannibalism of witches, and *fight* one another 'that the homesteads may be peaceful'. This fighting is 'to bring out war from within (*ukusosya*)';

[1] *cf. Good Company*, pp. 99-112. The belief that a witch or sorcerer must *confess* if the patient was to recover was the reason for the torture of witches in many African societies.